

VZCZCXRO7837
OO RUEHROV
DE RUEHKH #2867/01 3521457
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 181457Z DEC 06
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5588
INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CJTF HOA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 002867

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF/SPG, AND AF/RSA
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND SHORTLEY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/17/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SU](#) [UN](#)

SUBJECT: SE NATSIOS' VISIT TO ABYEI

Classified By: CDA Cameron Hume, Reason: Sections 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: During SE Natsios' December 11 to visit Abyei, UN officials and local leaders outlined the myriad problems facing the area as a result of territorial disputes between the Dinka and Massriya tribes, which international observers suggest make it the next potential flashpoint to derail the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). Though accounts of the dispute differed between the Dinka and Massriya leaders, UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) representatives and the force commander highlighted two key difficulties: 1) the lack of civil authority in the area and 2) movement restrictions placed on UNMIS to the north of Abyei town, which limited its ability to conduct its mission. These difficulties were exacerbated by the continuing presence of other armed groups (OAGs) and potential oil reserves in the area, which heightened "external interest." SE Natsios urged the parties to continue peaceful dialogue in an effort to forestall violence. End summary.

12. (C) According to UNMIS representatives, the absence of civil authority and infrastructure has hindered UN project implementation, particularly the activities of the World Food Program (WFP), and has slowed resettlement efforts for internally displaced persons (IDPs). This in turn has tarnished WFP's image among the population, despite its efforts to extend its standard three-month package for returnees until the beginning of the harvest season.

13. (C) UNMIS also blamed the government-imposed movement restrictions to the north of Abyei for lessening its ability to supply basic services and for preventing UNMIS forces from monitoring Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) deployments outside of the town. The restrictions had been in place for 18 months but were lifted for a one-month period beginning in late-November. UN representatives stated that the central government in Khartoum claimed that the restrictions were instituted by local officials while local officials attributed them to a directive from Khartoum. UNMIS suggested that the restrictions were imposed in order to protect sensitive oil drilling in the area. "People were living peacefully and intermarrying here until oil entered the equation," said UNMIS Head of Office in Abyei Ronald Quejas-Risdon (please protect). (Note: A UN official in Khartoum reported to Poloff on December 18 that the restrictions had been re-imposed within the last week. The UN has requested an explanation from the Sudanese government. End note.)

14. (C) The UNMIS force commander in Abyei described the security situation as "unpredictable." He noted that 307 of 319 Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) elements had been folded into Joint Integrated Units (JIUs), as had 185 of 320 SAF elements. However, the force commander said that three

main OAGs remained: 1) The 1,745-man force led by Col. Hassan Deng Malon and aligned with the SAF, 2) The 225-man force led by Col. Mohammed Hamid Hamad and aligned with the SPLA, and 3) The force led by Brig. Hassan Hamed Saleh, which claimed 27,000 men. UNMIS had attempted on December 10 to verify Saleh's astounding claim but was unsuccessful.

15. (C) Both the SPLA and SAF commanders of the JIUs requested USG assistance in resolving the outstanding issues in the area. The SPLA commander reiterated the difficulties posed by a lack of civil administration and asked SE Natsios what the role of the USG was in "rescuing the lives of the people of Abyei." Though the SAF commander emphasized the increased stability achieved since the first JIU was created in December 2005, he criticized the U.S. for accepting the now-contentious Abyei Border Commission (ABC) report without sufficient consultation with the Dinka and Massriya. "What are you expecting to do to bring together the two parties, given that one accepted the ABC report and the other did not?" questioned the SAF commander. SE Natsios emphasized that he was on a fact-finding mission to the area and urged the Sudanese to continue dialogue on the issue in order to prevent tensions from escalating. "This is essentially a Sudanese problem, not an American problem," explained SE Natsios, adding that the USG could help to facilitate negotiations between the parties.

16. (C) Massriya and Dinka leaders differed in their views of the conflict. One Massriya chief emphasized the historic links between the two tribes and blamed the problems on external incitement. "There is nothing that separates us. We are one community," he said, adding that his grandmother had been a Dinka. He recommended that a reconciliation could be effected if the two groups "sat together and if the politicians left us alone." He compared the Dinka and the

KHARTOUM 00002867 002 OF 002

Massriya to "fingers on a single hand." By contrast, Dinka leaders blamed the "other side" for delaying the implementation of the CPA and the return of IDPs. They also indicated that the Sudanese government in Khartoum was attempting to settle the oil-rich areas with the Massriya, who would then receive the majority of wealth generated from the profits. They called on the international community to increase the pressure on the Sudanese government to implement the CPA.
HUME